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*The Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) is the organization in the state that promotes leadership and creates a professional school counseling identity. This is achieved by connecting, supporting, and empowering school counselors through professional learning and advocacy.*

**Testimony of Michelle Catucci**  
**Executive Director, Connecticut School Counselor Association**  
*in opposition of*  
**S.B. 1095 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**  
Education Committee - March 1, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, Vice Chair Leeper, Vice Chair Winfield and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Michelle Catucci and I am the Department Chair of School Counseling in Cheshire and the Executive Director of the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA). Thank you for the opportunity to offer **testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 1095 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.**

**Senate Bill 1095 adds that (ii) that individuals who are school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides or other staff members and have appropriate training and ongoing supports may be assigned the duties of a school resource officer.**

This bill as written is in direct conflict with the role of the school counselor as defined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and in the Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling Framework (CCSCF) which was developed in collaboration between the Connecticut State Department of Education and CSCA. If that was not the intention of the bill as written, there needs to be further clarification of what the bill is referring to where it reads "assigned duties of a school resource officer" when suggesting that these duties can be performed by a school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker.

As a school counselor who works in a district with an SRO, I believe that it is crucially important to have both roles, with clearly delineated duties, to best support all students. I work collaboratively with our SRO on a daily basis to address students' needs and concerns. I rely on their expertise and training to provide services and resources that I cannot, especially in cases where disciplinary action needs to be taken. ASCA and the CCSCF both specify that it is an inappropriate duty for school counselors to be involved in disciplining students. The school counselor, by training, is someone who is there to advocate FOR students, to work WITH students using a preventative, systematic, and developmental school counseling curriculum, and to collaborate with all stakeholders on BEHALF of students. We are not trained to be disciplinarians or school resource officers.

School counselors follow the CCSCF to ensure ALL students have access to a high quality and effective school counseling program. School counselors, in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Department of Education are required to have a master's degree, graduate credits in counseling and special education, a professional educator certificate, practicum and internship experiences in school counseling. In my training to become a school counselor, I completed a 60 credit master's program that included both a practicum and internship. My education, training, and practical experiences focused on being a proactive counselor, seeking out and collaborating with all stakeholders - including students, parents, faculty, SROs, community members, and administrators - to ensure the academic, social-emotional, and post-secondary success of EVERY student. School Counselors are trained in data-driven decision making, to identify barriers to student success, and to implement a program of



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services at all grade levels, with an emphasis on equity and a multi-tiered approach, in collaboration with all educators and mental health professionals. Again, none of this training makes me qualified to serve in the role of a SRO.

It is also imperative to acknowledge that by putting this new, additional responsibility on school counselors that time is being taken away from the services and programs school counselors are hired to deliver. Every day I am working with my students on their academic, career, and social emotional development. I meet with them individually as needed, for regular short-term counseling, and for group counseling. School counselors are the front line for identifying and recognizing mental health needs of students and collaborating with others to get them the support they need. Often teachers and administrators seek school counselors out first when a concern comes up with a student. By design, 80% of a school counselor's time should be for direct services with students that are preventative and align with the three domains of our framework.

As a school counselor, my daily work includes advocacy for ALL students, planning and delivering interventions at tiers I, II, and III, providing short-term counseling, and program delivery that supports ALL students' academic, social-emotional, and college/career development. I am happy to continue doing that work in collaboration with my SRO, but not as a substitute for their much needed role.

**I would ask that you modify this bill to address the concerns I have discussed above. School Counselors should not be doing the work of the School Resource Officer as it is in direct conflict with the work and role of the School Counselor and is NOT what is best for students in Connecticut.**

Thank you for your time and attention,

*Michelle Catucci*

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